

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 4768

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, CI
SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH PINOCHET -- HE TALKS OF GOING

1. SUMMARY: I ATTENDED A DINNER AT THE PINOCHET RESIDENCE JUNE 22 WITH VARIOUS OTHER AMBASSADORS. DURING HIS TOAST THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT EVEN IF HE STEPPED DOWN OTHER MILITARY LEADERS WOULD CARRY ON PRESENT POLICIES. DURING A SUBSEQUENT PRIVATE 20 MINUTE CONVERSATION HE ELABORATED ON THIS AND RELATED THEMES, AND I TOLD HIM THAT I WAS RETURNING TO WASHINGTON JUNE 23 FOR CONSULTATION ON THE LETELIER CASE. I ENDED THE EVENING WITH A FEELING THAT PINOCHET IS A DEEPLY TROUBLED MAN. END SUMMARY.

2. THE DINNER GUESTS WERE ALL THE SOUTH AMERICAN AMBASSADORS, THE CHINESE (PRC) AND MYSELF --WITH WIVES. ALL OF US WERE SURPRISED BY PRESIDENT PINOCHET'S ALMOST MATTER OF FACT COMMENT DURING HIS TOAST THAT EVEN IF HE AND THOSE AROUND HIM ARE FORCED TO QUIT, THEY WOULD BE REPLACED BY OTHERS IN THE MILITARY WHO WOULD CARRY PRESENT POLICIES TO THEIR SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION. AFTER DINNER PINOCHET TOOK ME ASIDE FOR A 20 MINUTE PRIVATE CONVERSATION ON THE SAME AND RELATED SUBJECTS.

3. THE LETELIER CASE. I TOLD PINOCHET I WOULD BE DEPART-
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ING FOR WASHINGTON THE FOLLOWING DAY FOR URGENT CONSULTATIONS IN CONNECTION WITH THE LETELIER CASE. I SAID THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE HAD NOT RECEIVED THE PROMISED COOPERATION AND IN MY VIEW WE HAVE ENTERED A PERIOD OF IN-CRISIS IN OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS. THE PRESIDENT REPLIED THAT, AS USUAL, CHILE HAD ACTED IN GOOD FAITH AND HAD BEEN BETRAYED BY THE UNITED STATES. HE HAD

TURNED OVER TO THE UW TOWNLEY AS A SIGN OF HIS SINCERE ATTEMPT TO GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THE LETELIER MURDER. IT HAD BEEN HIS UNDERSTANDING THAT WE WOULD EXCHANGE INFORMATION ABOUT THE CASE, BUT THE US HAD FAILED TO DO SO. HE SAID NEVERTHELESS THE GUILTY WOULD BE PUNISHED IN ACCORDANCE WITH CHILEAN LAW PROVIDED VALID EVIDENCE WAS PRESENTED. HE SAID THE US SHOULD NOT BE BLINDED BY THINKING THAT THINGS WOULD CHANGE IF HE WERE DEPOSED. HE SAID IT WOULD BE FOOLISH FOR US TO PUT OUR HOPES IN GENERAL BRADY, WHO, WHILE THE MOST SENIOR MILITARY OFFICER, WAS NOT IN THE LINE OF COMMAND. PINOCHET SAID IF HE WERE TO BE REPLACED, IT WOULD BE BY A JUNIOR GENERAL WHO WOULD PROBABLY BE A GREAT DEAL TOUGHER THAN HE HAD BEEN.

4. US POLICY. PINOCHET SAID HE HAD ALWAYS BEEN A GREAT ADMIRER OF THE UNITED STATES, BUT THAT HE HAD BECOME TERRIBLY DISAPPOINTED BY OUR "CROOKED" ("TORCIDA") POLICY LINE. HE SAID HE REALIZED THERE ARE SOME PEOPLE IN THE ADMINISTRATION WHO WISHED CHILE WELL AND THAT A MAJORITY OF OFFICIALS WERE UNCOMMITTED, BUT THAT THERE WERE A FEW WHO WERE OUT TO DESTROY HIS REGIME AND THOSE WERE THE MOST VOCAL. HE EXPRESSED UNHAPPINESS WITH PRESIDENT CARTER'S OAS SPEECH EARLIER THAT DAY ("THE LINKAGE BETWEEN THE SUCCESSFULLY CONCLUDED PANAMA CANAL TREATIES AND THE US OFFER TO MEDIATE ON BOLIVIA'S REQUEST FOR AN

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OUTLET TO THE SEA IS OMINOUS FOR CHILE"), WHICH IN HIS VIEW WAS WRITTEN BY CHILE'S ENEMIES AND WHO ARE ALSO THE PEOPLE WHO INFLUENCED THE "WASHINGTON POST" TO WRITE ITS EDITORIAL OF JUNE 10. NOT FOLLOWING VERY LOGICALLY, PINOCHET THEN ARGUED THAT HE WOULD NOT LET THAT HAPPEN HERE (PRESUMABLY A REFERENCE TO POLITICAL MANIPULATION OF THE PRESS). IN FACT, HE SAID, HE WAS JUST ABOUT TO CLOSE A NEWSPAPER FOR TWO DAYS AS PUNISHMENT FOR PRINTING A CLAUDIO ORREGO INTERVIEW IN WHICH ORREGO GENERALLY SUPPORTED THE "WASHINGTON POST" EDITORIAL AND "PLACED GUILT FOR THE LETELIER AND OTHER MURDERS ON THE GOC." HE SAID THE POLITICAL PARTIES HAD ASKED HIM TO GET RID OF ALLENDE AND THE SAME PEOPLE WHO EGGED HIM ON IN 1973 ARE NOW HIS FIERCEST ENEMIES, PRESIDENT FREIG AMONG THEM, WHO IN HIS VIEW IS A "COWARD."

5. LOOKING AHEAD. PINOCHET SAID HE HAS THE SUPPORT OF THE JUNTA, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF GENERAL LEIGH -- WHO IS VACILLATING AND IS MORE OF A POLITICIAN THAN A SOLDIER. PINOCHET SAID THAT IF THE US WANTS TO MEDDLE IN CHILEAN AFFAIRS AND BRING BACK POLITICAL PARTIES, IT WILL CAUSE A "BLOODY REVOLUTION." BUT HE THEN QUICKLY ADDED, SOME-

WHAT AT VARIANCE WITH HIS DINNER TABLE COMMENT (PARA 2 ABOVE), THAT HE WOULD SEE TO IT THAT THINGS DID NOT COME TO THAT. WARMING TO THE THEME, AND POINTING TO THE AMBASSADOR NEARBY, PINOCHET SAID THAT CHILE COULD TURN TO CHINA, IF NECESSARY, OR EVEN TO THE SOVIET UNION. HAVING LISTENED FOR SOME TIME TO HIS MONOLOGUE, I ASKED PINOCHET IF HE REALLY MEANT HIS LAST STATEMENT. HE ASSURED ME THAT HE DID, THAT THE SOVIETS WOULD ALWAYS INTERVENE AGAINST US INTERESTS AND IT WAS UNFORTUNATE WE WERE UNABLE TO UNDERSTAND THIS.

6. COMMENT: DURING THE 20-MINUTE DISCOURSE, PINOCHET, WHO NORMALLY DRINKS VERY LITTLE, HAD TWO SCOTCH AND SODAS. HIS FACE GREW REDDER AND REDDER AS HE TALKED TO
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ME. AT THE END HE WAS SOMEWHAT AGGRESSIVE, HE APPEARED A DEEPLY TROUBLED MAN AND HIS CONCERN THAT HE MIGHT BE REPLACED BY OTHER MILITARY OFFICERS SEEMS TO BE FOREMOST ON HIS MIND, A FACT NOTED BY MOST OF MY COLLEAGUES, WHO ONLY HEARD THE DINNER SPEECH BUT NOT THE CONVERSATION HE HAD WITH ME AFTERWARDS.
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